

THE NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE

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# *Soviet Said to Hold Million in Prison, Including 10,000 on Political Charges*

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN  
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 10 —

While Soviet authorities have drastically reduced the size of their prison population in the 20 years since Stalin's death, Western experts believe that more than a million Soviet citizens, including about 10,000 political prisoners, remain in captivity in a network of about 900 prisons and labor camps throughout the country.

Interest in the Soviet penal system has been raised by the publication of Aleksander I. Solzhenitsyn's latest book, "The Gulag Archipelago: 1918-1956," which discussed the system before the prison population was cut to about one million, a figure most Western experts believe has remained constant since the mid-fifties.

Mr. Solzhenitsyn estimated that the total population of Soviet prison camps did not at

any one time exceed 12 million, of whom half were probably so-called political prisoners. This peak is believed to have been reached just before Stalin's death in 1953. Mr. Solzhenitsyn did not offer any over-all total of prison camp inmates for the period of roughly 40 years covered by his statistics.

## Estimate by the C. I. A.

The Central Intelligence Agency, through the use of satellite photographs, puts the current prison population at 2.4 million to 2.5 million, but State Department and outside experts such as Peter Reddaway, the British specialist on Soviet prisons, believe the number is closer to one million. Of these, according to the estimate of Mr. Reddaway, a senior lecturer at the London School of Economics, about 10,000 can be classed as political prisoners.

On a per-capita basis, this would mean that two and a

half times as many Soviet citizens are in captivity as Americans. The United States has the largest prison population in the Western world, about 425,000.

Since the late nineteenth century, the Soviet Union has not released information about its crime rate or its prison system and little is known about the mass of ordinary prisoners. But much has been learned about the system in recent years through interviews with former inmates allowed to emigrate to Israel, the United States and other countries.

In addition, Mr. Reddaway and others have done extensive research on the system by carefully analyzing the many written accounts of the camps circulated in underground, typed form known as "samizdat," or "self-published."

The political-prisoner group

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# Soviet's Internal Security Eased Since Stalinist Era

Arbitrary Repression That Solzhenitsyn Described Is Now Much Reduced—  
 Facade of Legality Upheld

By HEDRICK SMITH  
 Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, Jan. 12 — In the cases are open and shut, 20 years since Stalin's death, often rushed through in a day, the Soviet internal security system has undergone significant changes. It is common for arbitrary and violent repression to join prosecutors in the cases described by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in his new book, "The Gulag Archipelago," it is very unusual for any judge to give a sentence that differs from the state prosecutor's plea.

Not only are there believed to be far fewer persons in the considerable Soviet prison network for political reasons, but Soviet authorities make a greater attempt at preserving the facade of legality in their prosecution of political dissidents.

Some Soviet dissenters themselves concede that today there is less of the terrifying arbitrariness of the Stalinist purges, which made any citizen subject to unpredictable arrest and imprisonment without trial on the basis of executive orders and secret denunciations.

"Today," said a free-thinking writer, "people pretty well know when they are taking a risk. If you mind your own business, just follow your career, keep quiet and say what is expected of you, you can keep out of trouble. But under Stalin, even that kind of conformity did not guarantee you safety."

**Justice Still Harsh**  
 "Imagine if Solzhenitsyn in 1952 had written a book about the forced collectivization of Soviet agriculture in the nineteen-thirties—in other words, about events 20 years before—as he has done now," said a Western diplomat trying to pose a comparison with the Stalinist era. "What would have happened to him? He would already have been arrested, and probably sent to prison or maybe shot."

By Western standards Soviet justice remains harsh and heavily loaded in favor of the state and its concept of internal security and against the individual. Moreover, the state has powerful means of nonjudicial punishment and pressure at its disposal—such as dismissal from jobs, virtually all of which are in government-run offices or factories; expulsion from residential and intellectual unions; which in effect destroy careers—and bureaucratic harassment, such as refusal to permit residence in Moscow or historian, was tried in a re-

strategems. Either way, the defense is rarely given more than minimal time to read the prosecution's case and, as in the case of Mr. Shikhanovich, defense lawyers sometimes do not even meet the accused.

## An Occasional Challenge

Nonetheless, Soviet sources say that when defendants or their lawyers are particularly courageous, some modest courtroom give-and-take occurs, usually involving challenges to the prosecution case based on legal technicalities or extenuating circumstances. Some dissidents, in their final statements to the courts, have accused the Government of violating the liberally worded Soviet Constitution by its severe restrictions of free speech, broad interpretations of anti-Soviet activities, violations of legal procedures or use of contestable psychiatric findings.

No one, however, can recall a trial in recent years where a political dissident has been found innocent. A finding of guilty is taken for granted by all once a case goes to court.

Despite all this, in comparison with the Stalinist terror described in Mr. Solzhenitsyn's book, Soviet authorities have in recent years treated political dissidents with clemency.

Both Mr. Yakir and Mr. Kravsin were sentenced to three years in jail and three in exile in a remote place after confessing dissident activities, with their sentences later reduced to three years of exile not far from Moscow.

## Forced Labor Camps In The Soviet Union (As of February 1973)



The New York Times/Jan. 13, 1974

# Soviet Is Said to Hold a Million in Prisons

Continued From Page 1, Col. 6

includes intellectuals who have been arrested for circulating dissident documents regarded as anti-Soviet by authorities, those who seek to practice their religion outside the officially approved system of worship, and those who have engaged in activities in support of Soviet minorities.

## Most Go to Labor Camps

Life in any penal system is grim, of course, but the Soviet system is unique in that almost all prisoners are assigned to labor camps. Only a small percentage spend their terms in prisons, such as the prison in Vladimir, a town northeast of Moscow that is known to tourists for its ancient churches.

Comments about the camps have varied, but in general most recent prisoners tend to agree that the quality of life depends primarily on the type of camp to which a person is assigned.

There are by Soviet law four basic types of camps.

The vast majority of prisoners are assigned to what are called "ordinary regime" camps.

## Data on All Types

The next grade of severity is the "strict regime," and the two most severe grades are called "strict regime," and "special regime." The last two

concentration-camp experts of the Third Reich."

A report by Mr. Reddaway for the International Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in the U.S.S.R. in Brussels last year, said that "the worst single aspect of the conditions in Soviet camps, especially those of strict and special regime, is the constant hunger, which torments and even tortures the prisoners, often for years on end."

He quoted from the appeal of Yuri Galanskov, a young man arrested in 1967 for having edited an underground journal called Phoenix. He died in 1972 on an operating table in a camp hospital. In that year, Mr. Galanskov had sent the following smuggled appeal to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights:

"I am ill with a stomach ulcer. Of the food I receive I can eat only a small part, so every day I get too little sleep. I have been undernourished and am getting too little sleep for five years now. And

buy a toothbrush and comb in the camp store."

"In every barracks, there was a stove, for which they provided 22 pounds of coal and 2 pounds of wood a day," she said. "In general, there were no sanitary conditions to speak of. Often there was no water to wash with after work. In the morning, no one had time to wash. There was one washstand for 120 people where six to seven people could stand at once. They gave you a bath once every 10 days for a half hour. They gave you not water for laundry once in 10 days."

"Lice were prevalent. The whole time I was in the camp, I was rampant dysentery," she added. "She said that prisoners could receive an unlimited number of letters, but a great number of mine were confiscated."

"It was possible to receive a package once every three months, up to a weight of 11 pounds," she said. "A four-hour meeting with friends or relatives was allowed every fourth month. A meeting with a close relative, such as a wife or husband, was permitted once every six months and could last up to three days."

the days in camp apparently became a sort of mystical experience because they used the time to examine their views on life and to exchange profound ideas with fellow inmates.

Yuri L. Gendler, who recently emigrated to the United States, remarked in an interview over Radio Liberty, "I must say directly that the camp period of my life was exceptionally interesting, difficult and important."

"It was, perhaps, the most significant experience acquired in my life," he said. "Of course, I am far from idealizing the camp and in no way advertising the 'sunny resorts' of Mordvinia. My term—three years—by Soviet standards was short. Beside the spiritual suffering connected with confinement, many experienced physical suffering, because of illness, particularly stomach ailments."

But Mr. Gendler said that despite the drawbacks to camp life, he never before had had "such a possibility" to re-examine himself.

## Philosophical Discussions

He said that in addition to real criminals, his camp housed "intelligent people, who held completely different views and in meetings with them I was able better to understand and state my own position."

He said that in such meetings, which usually took place

does not contain such clearcut protections of defendants as the writ of habeas corpus or unambiguous guarantees against self-incrimination. An accused person under investigation can be interrogated for months on end and held incommunicado. His lawyer is not allowed to see him until the investigation is concluded and the prosecution has prepared its case. The law permits detention of an accused person for nine months during investigation but Soviet officials have said that extensions can be obtained from the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the standard executive of the Soviet parliament.

#### Pressure to Cooperate

In practice, secret police interrogators are said to have great power because defendants understand that normally their recommendations for punishment, relayed through state prosecutors, are accepted by judges. Hence, dissidents report, there is strong incentive to cooperate with an interrogator.

Dissidents complain that in some cases the legalities are only minimally observed.

They cite the case of Yuri A. Shikhanovich, former Moscow University mathematician held incommunicado for 14 months after his arrest. He was ordered held in a mental hospital last November in a hearing at which he was not present. He was represented by a defense lawyer whom he had never met.

In another important dissident case, Vladimir Bukovsky, was sentenced to 12 years in prison, jail and exile in January, 1972, after having been held incommunicado for eight months and being allowed to see his defense lawyer only shortly before the trial. He asked for 12 defense witnesses, to be called, but the court rejected all of them.

Both Russians and foreigners were inclined to compare the trial last September of Pyotr I. Yel'tsin and Viktor A. Kravtsov, two dissidents, to the show trials of the Stalinist period. Both men had been held so long they were presumed to have been broken by the secret police and carefully rehearsed their testimony after receiving promises of clemency for naming other dissidents involved in preparing and circulating samizdat, or underground publications.

Technically speaking, trials of dissidents are open, but Russians say that in practice they are closed to all but a handful of the closest relatives of the defendant. Foreign newsmen are always barred, as are most interested friends. Increasingly, authorities try leading dissidents outside Moscow to reduce international publicity or any chance of active protests. From accounts of some who have gotten into courtrooms, years later.

a labor camp in Magadan where he was finishing a three-year term. After his second conviction, based on testimony of camp inmates, his wife and friends raised a protest, fearing that the frail and ailing historian would not survive a second term in the harsh conditions of Siberia.

After an appeal through the courts, Mr. Amalrim had his second three-year sentence commuted to exile and was given a post as a senior laboratory assistant in a remote institute in northeast Siberia.

Perhaps even more strikingly in comparison with the Stalinist era, political dissidents today are almost never sentenced to death.

In the much publicized case of the Leningrad hijacking conspiracy, tried in December, 1970, against several Jews and other Russians who had planned to hijack a Soviet airliner to escape abroad, two defendants were given death sentences but both were commuted to long terms after an outcry from world public opinion.

#### Poublicity Is a Weapon

The sensitivity of Soviet authorities to Western public and official reaction to crackdowns against dissenters in the last few years is considered by Western specialists to be one of the most important moderating influences on Soviet authorities and the secret police.

This is a marked change since the Stalinist era and even the Khrushchev ruled the Soviet Union.

As described by Mr. Solzhenitsyn, the legal system under Stalin was essentially one of complete lawlessness. A Soviet Constitution and a Code of Law existed. The statutes had been "published" but the volumes were available only to the secret police. Only occasionally and often by accident did an arrested person learn what the charge against him was. Nor was he allowed to see his lawyer without introduction. "Well, tell us about your crimes." If he protested, he was told: "You know better than we what you have done."

It was, in Mr. Solzhenitsyn's words, up to the defendant to invent his crime and once that had been done the interrogator would rapidly elaborate upon it. There was no question of "innocence" once a person was arrested. Often persons who did more than inquire about the fate of others would themselves be arrested and charged with "complicity" in whatever case was being manufactured against their relative or friend.

Sentences often were imposed without the defendant even being aware of what they were. Sometimes on arriving at a concentration camp, according to Mr. Solzhenitsyn, a prisoner would be told he was in for eight years or 10 years, but sometimes he was told only in

gerous criminals or political prisoners.

Many political prisoners, offenders, or those convicted of lesser violations, have served in the "ordinary" camps and as a result, political prisoners have been able to provide information about all types of camps.

These points seem to emerge: Life is difficult in almost every type of camp, but most people survive and are released when their terms expire, something that rarely happened in the Stalin days.

As in Soviet society, if a prisoner does not engage in political activity critical of the regime, he is unlikely to suffer any additional penalty. But if he is outspoken in defense of his rights, or engages in the kind of free-thinking that led to his arrest—if he is a political prisoner—he is apt to endure harsh punishment, ranging from isolation in a narrow, dark dungeon, to physical abuse, and he loses such "privileges" as mail and visits.

Camps are not totally bleak places. Some former prisoners called the experience "meaningful" because of the opportunity it gave them for introspection. And in some respects, they said, life in prison was interesting because discussions could be held with a cross-section of society not readily available on the outside.

Many prisoners are not easily cowed in Soviet camps. Despite threats of punishment, many of them know their rights and when authorities deny them, these captives have engaged in hunger strikes that often have resulted in decisions in their favor. In fact, in the last two years, Moscow has instructed camps to tighten discipline, and in the "strict" regime camps, the bread ration, the mainstay of the diet, has been reduced to less than a pound a day.

#### Secret Channels Used

Prisoners have also been able to send out regular reports and protests through secret channels about camp conditions.

In 1969, for instance, seven political prisoners issued a clandestine statement that said, in part:

"Russia is still crisscrossed by a network of camps where—despite all the international conventions signed by the Soviet Government—forced labor and cruel exploitation are the norm, where people are systematically kept hungry and constantly humiliated, where their human dignity is debased."

Through these camps passes an uninterrupted human flow, millions strong, which gives back to society physically and morally crippled people. This is the result of a deliberate penal policy, worked out by the secret police, with a soap, about eight ounces a month. It was necessary to

eight hours a day. Every day is a torment for me, a daily struggle against pain and illness.

Death Was an Exception

Mr. Galanskov's death at the age of 33 was, however, an exception, Mr. Reddaway believes.

Mr. Reddaway, in an interview in New York where he is spending the academic year at Columbia University, said that although several other political prisoners had died in camps, he believed that Soviet authorities did not as a policy seek the death of prisoners. Rather "keeping people feeling hungry is part of the punishment," he said.

Anatoly Marchenko, who wrote a book smuggled to the West called "My Testimony" about his experience in camps in the nineteen-sixties, said, "The usual rations are such as to make a person feel perpetual want of food, perpetual malnutrition."

#### Woman Describes Diet

"The daily camp ration—under the strict regime—contains 2,400 calories (enough for a 7- to 11-year-old child) and has to suffice for an adult doing physical labor, day after day for many years, sometimes as many as 15 to 25," he wrote. "The convicts never even set eyes on fresh vegetables, butter and many other indispensable products."

Raiza Palatnik, a Jewish activist in Odessa, was sentenced in 1971 to two years' confinement in an "ordinary regime" camp for allegedly spreading slander about the Soviet state and social system. She emigrated to Israel last year and gave the following description, in answer to a questionnaire, of the daily camp diet in her less severe regime:

"They fed us three times a day. In the morning, a thin soup of gruel, rotten fish and tea with three-quarters of an ounce of sugar. In the evening, the same, only without sugar. The main meal at lunchtime was cabbage soup made from water and bones. The second course at lunch was oatmeal or sometimes a small potato with vegetables. A little more than a pound of bread was distributed daily."

Miss Palatnik said she lived with 23 other women in a room with a floor space of 200 square feet.

In the camp barracks, she said, prisoners slept in two-decker bunks. For mattresses they were given "a dirty ripped sack" that they filled with stuffing. She said an "old" blanket, two sheets and two pillow cases were also handed out, and were expected to be used for as long as a person was in the camp.

"You washed them yourself," she said. "There was no laundry, about eight ounces a month. It was necessary to

#### Hour a Day Outdoors

In the camp, Miss Palatnik says, she worked eight hours in a prison clothing factory, and then had the rest of the time free to sleep, walk around, read and write. She said inmates were confined for 23 hours a day and were allowed only one hour outdoors.

For amusement, Miss Palatnik said, prisoners could play chess or checkers. There was a camp library with Soviet books and newspapers. Prisoners were not allowed radios or television sets, but each barracks had a loudspeaker that broadcast the main Moscow radio program. She added that there were concerts by local prisoners and a movie every Sunday.

Once a week, there was a political lecture of about two hours, but she paid no attention to it.

Another former prisoner, Anatoly V. Radygin, said in a questionnaire that political discussions went on constantly "between prisoners of different ideological persuasion, and between prisoners and the camp administration."

"Political study lectures took place weekly, and officially were regarded as voluntary," he said. "The great majority of the prisoners, tired of permanent repression, preferred to sit passively through the lectures, passively listening to the endless portion of demagoguery and lies."

#### Psychological Maneuvering

"A minority, much more profound, preferred to avoid the political lectures in general, and as a result were brutally punished," he said. "Others were interested in attacking the lecturers," he said, including himself in this group. They sought a "political dispute, trying by logic and facts to push the lecturer into a corner," he said.

For her work, Miss Palatnik received an average of 60 to 65 rubles (about \$75) a month. Half of that went to cover the upkeep of the camp. She had to pay about 15 rubles for her food.

If a prisoner made a legal appeal, he had to pay costs. Any money left over could be spent at the camp store, up to 7 rubles a month, to buy food to supplement the diet.

When released, she was given 108 rubles that she had not yet spent.

Miss Palatnik's experiences at her camp, No. 308/34 in the city of Dnepropetrovsk in the Ukraine, were considerably milder than the experiences of some prisoners, particularly those in the complexes situated in the Mordvinian region, situated in the Volga Hills area of the Russian Republic, where the majority of political prisoners are now sent. An increasing number of political prisoners, however, are now being assigned to the Perm area in the Ural Mountains.

in small groups and "some specialist from a rather specific field would give a report, for instance on the philosophy of Berdyaev, about the philosophy of Leontyev, about artistry of Dostoyevsky, about the creativity of Gogol."

"I often talked about the novels of Solzhenitsyn, which I had read on my own and understood well," he said.

"The majority of those in the camp did not know the new works of Solzhenitsyn," he said. He had read them prior to his arrest.

"We discussed such themes as the reasons for the drop in morals and morality among the youth of East and West," he said.

"Many of us undertook a very serious self-education," he continued. "For instance, I learned the English language in the camp, after studying the language quite hard. In the camp, there were those who knew English well and had lived for some time in the United States. They helped me very much in mastering the language."

#### Prisoners Gave Talks

Mr. Gendler said that in late 1969, "each of us prepared a talk on the theme, the most important three events which in your opinion took place in the past decade."

"Each of us spoke on three themes and argued why those events were so important," he said. "And of course, after all the speeches, endless arguments began, which lasted into the early morning, sometimes spilling over into the next day."

The camps are run by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with the subdivision for prisons known as the "Main Directorate for Places of Confinement." It is known by the Russian initials as "GUMZ." In Stalin's time, the title was "Main Directorate for Camps," known by the initials, "GULAG," as in the title of Mr. Solzhenitsyn's book.

#### 300 Addresses Compiled

Mr. Reddaway said that he believed there were about 900 camps and that he had compiled about 300 addresses so far. The exact sites have been publicized by those who were released or by the relatives of prisoners.

A major source of information about camps has been provided by the schismatic wing of the Baptist organization in the Soviet Union, which has not agreed to Soviet authority. At any time, several hundred Baptists are in confinement. They usually are not harassed by other prisoners. Mr. Reddaway said, because their dedication to work is respected.

Jewish organizations in the United States report that many of the Jews who have been imprisoned have complained about anti-Semitism in camps, on the part of other prisoners as well. Baptists have also been subject to punishment.

GEOGRAPHY DIVISION Record of Classification Decision

16 January 1973  
(Date)

1. Title of report, study, or map:  
Forced Labor Camps and Prisons in the USSR.
2. Project No. and Report No. or Map No.:  
PN 64.2545, Report No. BGI GR 73-1
3. Classification, control, and exempt category:  
SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

25X1A

4. Name of classifier/analyst:

[REDACTED]

25X1A

5. Rationale for classification and exemption:

This report is a sanitized version of our TOP SECRET code work study on the same topic. The NO FOREIGN DISSEM was added to satisfy DDP requirements. [REDACTED] made this request to [REDACTED] who in turn consulted with [REDACTED]. The final decision was ultimately made by [REDACTED] who directed [REDACTED] to affix the NO FOREIGN DISSEM exemption. Sources used in report, study or map which have a bearing on classification and exemption:

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OBGI

25X1A

25X1C

The DD/P will shortly release an unclassified version of our labor camp study. This will be accomplished through [REDACTED]. It was the contention of members of [REDACTED] that the appearance of OBGI's study at the SECRET level concurrently with their unclassified version would [REDACTED] hence the addition of the No Foreign exemption.

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25X1C

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<b>XX PROJECT PROPOSAL</b>		<b>RESEARCH ACTIVITY NOTICE</b>	
SUBJECT		PROJECT NUMBER	
The Soviet Corrective Labor Camp System		64.2545	
REQUESTER		SUBJECT CODE	
Self-initiated		REQUESTING OFFICE	
STATEMENT OF PROBLEM		TARGET DATE	
<p>To produce an Intelligence Memorandum updating our research results on the Soviet corrective labor camp system.</p> <p>BACKGROUND: In February 1969 OBGI published the first comprehensive assessment of the then-current extent of the Soviet corrective labor camp system (CIA/BGI GR 69-2, TOP SECRET CODEWORD). Since the issuance of that first basic report, GD/S has continued to monitor special source materials for additional information. Our original total of about 760 active camps has been increased by an additional 63. There is now reason to believe that the estimate of 500,000 to 1,000,000 persons confined in these camps may have been too low. We have also developed some new leads on the manner in which this force is utilized in the construction and mining industries. We propose to round out this research and publish the results as an intelligence memorandum at the codeword level.</p>		ANALYST/BRANCH	
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		175	
<p>This is sanitized version of CIA/BGI GR 72-11</p>			
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OTHER CIA: OCI, OER, OSR, IAS			
NON-CIA : none			
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